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UNITED STATES FORCES-AFGHANISTAN  
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**USFOR-A PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Soldier faces criminal charges**

KABUL, Afghanistan (Mar. 23, 2012) -- Criminal charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) were formally preferred today against U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales. The charges allege that, on or about March 11, 2012, SSG Bales did, with premeditation, murder seventeen Afghan civilians and assaulted and attempted to murder six other civilians at or near Belambey, Panjwa'i District of Afghanistan's Kandahar province.

Staff Sergeant Bales is assigned to 2d Battalion, 3d Infantry Regiment (Rear) (Provisional), headquartered at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. He is currently in pre-trial confinement at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Under the UCMJ, the maximum possible punishment for a premeditated murder conviction is a dishonorable discharge from the Armed Forces, reduction to the lowest enlisted grade, total forfeiture of pay and allowances, and death (with a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment for life with eligibility for parole).

The next procedural step in the military justice process is for the Special Court-Martial Convening Authority at Joint Base Lewis-McChord to decide whether to direct an investigation of the charges under UCMJ Article 32. An Article 32 investigating officer submits to the command a written report with non-binding recommendations concerning the sufficiency of the charges and evidence. The report aids the command in determining an appropriate disposition of the charges. The charges may not be referred to a general court-martial absent a prior Article 32 investigation.

No disposition decision has been made concerning the preferred charges. Preferral of charges represents an accusation of criminal misconduct only. In accordance with U.S. law, a military member accused of criminal misconduct is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at a trial by court-martial.

The investigation of these events is ongoing. Further media inquiries into this case should be directed to I Corps Public Affairs at 253-477-0161.

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